



LOUISIANA DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE & FORESTRY
MIKE STRAIN DVM, COMMISSIONER

Louisiana Specialty Crop Program
Final Performance Report
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PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry (LDAF) was awarded \$110,867.83 in funding for the FY2008 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program (SCBGP). LDAF implemented projects to enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops throughout the state.

Specialty crop farmers in Louisiana produce a wide range of crops including nursery stock and foliage, Christmas trees, strawberries, cabbage and other winter vegetables, tomatoes, sweet and hot peppers, okra, southern peas, watermelons, pecans, citrus, sweet potatoes, mushrooms and wine. These and other specialty crops have enabled the continuance and even growth of the family farm, many of whom have increased their production to a point where they are able to sell their products to local retailers and chain stores.

Louisiana's projects focused on furthering that growth with support in generic programs that inform consumers of the availability of Louisiana specialty crops, expanding producer direct market opportunities and furnishing point of sale material, advertising, and buyer development resources to our specialty crop producers. LDAF projects were designed to improve the competitiveness of Louisiana's specialty crops and capitalize on the growing demand for local foods and freshness. Several Louisiana projects built on previously funded projects with the SCBGP.

TRADE PROMOTIONS

Project Summary

In recent years, Louisiana has seen an increase in farmers' markets and roadside stands with the increased demand for fresh, locally grown fruits and vegetables, as well as other specialty crops. Even with this growth, small producers have found it extremely difficult to grow their businesses and take advantage of direct market sales in the retail and restaurant industries. High costs of advertising and marketing efforts are extremely difficult, if not impossible, for new and small producers to expand in the marketplace. In order to take advantage of the current increased demand for fresh, local purchasing, this project assisted producers with direct marketing their products at industry trade shows.

Visibility at the trade shows provided marketing opportunities to showcase producer products to gain market penetration and build long-lasting vendor relationships. This project built on a previously funded project with the SCBGP. This project complimented the prior grant period project by recruiting and inviting additional specialty crop producers to participate in the project so that participants could attend and showcase their products to potential buyers.

Project Approach

In order to assist Louisiana specialty crop producers in expanding their sales opportunities, LDAF conducted two trade promotion activities designed to assist producers with costs and staffing associated with participation at local and regional trade shows. This trade show project provided opportunities for companies to participate in a LDAF double booth area to showcase their products and market to food and agricultural interests, i.e., retail, food service, distributors, brokers, and specialty markets for gifts and gourmet products. For those producers that expressed interest in participating, but could not attend in person, LDAF staff picked up their products and brochures to provide taste samplings and provide company information to trade show attendees.

LDAF staff conducted a follow-up survey by phone several months post events to determine follow through success on business leads made and determine sales made as a result of participating in the trade show events.

1. The LDAF sponsored a specialty crop double booth (10' X 20') at the 2011 Louisiana Restaurant Association (LRA) Expo in New Orleans, August 6-8, 2011. The LRA Expo is the largest food service focused trade show on the Gulf Coast. The 2011 version drew more than 11,000 visitors who shopped at nearly 500 booths at the Morial Convention Center. LDAF recruited specialty crop producers to display their products in the space. Invitations were mailed to over 300 known specialty crop producers throughout Louisiana alerting them to the opportunity and soliciting their participation.

Eighteen growers provided product and business information for the display including pecans, watermelons and peaches, onions, tomatoes, red and green okra, cantaloupes, white and portabella mushrooms, sweet potatoes, squash, hot and sweet peppers, herbs and spices, specialty crop value added jams and jellies as well as wines.

2. LDAF secured space at the 2012 North Louisiana Agri-Business Council Annual Expo (Ag Expo). Invitations were mailed to over 300 growers and specialty crop value-added producers to participate and provide product. Twelve producers responded and were represented at the trade show. Event attendees were provided food samplings of fresh tomato salsa, strawberries and pecans. LDAF staff assisted those producers that could not attend in person. Producer information and recipe cards were disseminated to the more than 11,500 attendees. The 2012 Ag Expo was held January 20-21 in West Monroe, Louisiana, at the Ike Hamilton Expo Center.

Goals and Outcomes Achieved

The goal of this project was to supply the opportunity for 25 producers of specialty crops to participate in local, state, regional or national trade promotions exhibiting their products to 7,000 restaurant operations and related businesses. Projected sales goal due to the exposure within one year of events was \$75,000.

Goals were met and exceeded with more than 30 producers participating in the trade shows and with producers gaining exposure by more than 22,500 consumers, restaurant operations and related business attendees.

LDAF staff conducted a follow-up survey by phone several months post events to determine follow through success on business leads made and to determine sales made as a result of participating in the trade show events. Of those that completed post event surveys, the following sales related information was provided.

Follow-up surveys were conducted by phone calls to all 30 producers. It was learned from prior year grant activities that producers are reluctant to provide detailed sales data and mailed surveys were not returned. Producers seem reluctant in providing details of their actual sales breakdowns other than by range, so survey questions were asked in range categories so that measurable data could be obtained and conducted by phone.

By conducting phone call surveys, we were able to get a 70% response to the follow-up survey. Of the 21 post event producers that responded to the follow-up survey, 12 producers stated that due to the leads made at the above listed trade show events each saw an increase in sales. Nine producers reported an increase between \$1,000 and \$10,000 in sales. One producer reported sales in the hundreds range. One producer reported an increase in sales of \$25,000 due to his leads made and still had a pending sale deal with a major distribution company to be finalized. Another producer reported purchase orders for his mushrooms that would result in an increase in \$286,000 in sales due to event leads. He stated he had additional leads that he was still in communication with and was confident that additional orders would be placed.

The cumulative results of those surveyed show a minimum of \$320,000 increase in sales as a result of their participation in the trade show project. The project goal of \$75,000 in sales was met and exceeded. Due to the lack of specific sales figures from those nine who only agreed to give sales in range category, it is probable that the goal was exceeded by an even higher number. The lowest number \$1,000, of the scale range was used to calculate those nine producers' sales numbers.

Beneficiaries

The project directly impacted 30 specialty crop producers whose products were showcased at local, regional and state trade shows. At least 12 producers benefited with increased sales. Indirectly, all specialty crop producers benefited by the retail industry and consumers, more than 22,500, being better informed as to the availability of Louisiana specialty crops.

Lessons Learned

We learned once again that it is very difficult to achieve post event data collection. Patience and persistence is needed to acquire these numbers. Continued follow-up calls must be made to reach the producers.

As in past related projects, we continued to see that sampling of the products and in person displays of the different varieties offered by the producers were the most successful approaches to acquire post event follow-up from leads made during the event. Producers that reported sales actually provided samplings or brought displays of produce to the event. No sales were reported by producers that only provided information on their business in the form of brochures.

Additional Information

2011 Louisiana Restaurant Association Food Expo



2012 North Louisiana Agri-Business Council Annual Expo



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POINT OF SALE PROMOTIONS PRODUCT DEMONSTRATIONS

Project Summary

This project developed and implemented product demonstrations featuring Louisiana produced specialty crops at the point of sale. The product demonstrations featured new and reinforced current uses of specialty crops at the point of sale in Louisiana retail stores that sell specialty crops. At least 75 in-store demonstrations were to be conducted to raise consumer awareness of the uses of such products and increase sales. In this fast-paced world, most shoppers bypass the fresh produce sections when shopping to purchase quick canned or box solutions to meals. By conducting product demonstrations, this project was able to show consumers new recipe ideas and demonstrate how easy it is to cook with fresh products. This project not only focused on educating the consumer to expand their purchasing habits, but in increasing sales as a result.

This project built on a previously funded project with the SCBGP. The project complimented the prior grant period project by conducting additional demonstrations in additional retail chains that were fiscally unable to be conducted that showcase specialty crop recipes and tastings to better inform the consumer and thereby increase sales.

Project Approach

In order to assist Louisiana specialty crop producers in increasing their sales opportunities and demonstrate to the consumer new and current uses of specialty crops and their availability, the project conducted demonstrations at several different retail chains in Louisiana.

LDAF contracted with GMc Advertising to assist in working with retailers to identify stores throughout Louisiana to host product demonstrations of Louisiana specialty crops. Collaboration with producers to determine retailers that sold local specialty crops produced in Louisiana was extremely helpful in coordinating this effort and streamlining efforts to find host retailers. Meetings were held with several retailers offering to participate in hosting demos at several of their locations.

Winn Dixie offered 33 of their store locations and Rouses offered 32 of their store locations throughout Louisiana. Breau Mart hosted demonstrations in five of their stores, Whole Foods hosted three stores and Matherne's held demonstrations in one of their stores.

74 different stores participated in this product demonstration project. Seven specialty crops (sweet potatoes, bell peppers, strawberries, onions, tomatoes, garlic and mushrooms) were demoed. The demonstrations were held between March 19 and April 17, 2011.

Goals and Outcomes Achieved

The goal of this project was to conduct at least 75 product demonstrations at point of sale, farmers' markets, or televised etc., showcasing new or reinforcing current uses of specialty crops, thereby increasing sales of specialty crops by 50%.

This project met and surpassed the goal of conducting 75 product demonstrations. During this grant period, we were able to conduct 247 specialty crop product demonstrations in 74 retail stores. Additionally, the goal was to also increase sales as a result of conducting the product demonstrations. As a whole, this project met the goal of a 50% increase in sales with three out of the five chain retailers individually surpassing that goal. Of the 74 individual store locations, sales results varied from no increase to huge increases, but overall sales were increased as a direct result of the presence of product demonstrations held at the point-of-sale.

Winn Dixie Demonstrations 2012

May 27, 29 April 2, 3, 4, 10, 11, 12

Store	Prior Demo Sales			Demo Day Sales			Increase
	Strawberry	Pecan		Strawberry	Pecan		
1329	139	14	=153	177	0	=177	16%
1353	27	2	=29	41	23	=64	121%

Specialty Crop Block Grant Program – Louisiana Department of Agriculture & Forestry

1404	85	4	=89	113	12	=125	40%
1405	40	0	=40	39	5	=44	10%
1406	48	2	=50	34	1	=35	-30%
1408	25	0	=25	48	8	=56	124%
1411	62	3	=65	90	7	=97	49%
1412	49	5	=54	53	2	=55	2%
1425	27	3	=30	34	2	=36	20%
1426	40	19	=59	52	7	=59	0%
1430	80	0	=80	100	0	=100	25%
1431	31	1	=32	26	1	=27	-15%
1432	29	0	=29	36	0	=36	24%
1439	32	3	=35	54	3	=57	63%
1440	75	1	=76	87	0	=87	14%
1443	159	4	=163	137	0	=137	-16%
1446	37	0	=37	45	0	=45	22%
1448	75	0	=75	49	4	=53	-29%
1454	71	2	=73	66	0	=66	-10%
1461	36	2	=38	53	3	=56	47%
1463	27	0	=27	46	6	=52	93%
1467	50	2	=52	54	0	=54	4%
1490	30	0	=30	57	1	=58	93%
1500	39	2	=41	83	22	=105	156%
1537	41	2	=43	106	5	=111	158%
1540	33	4	=37	76	9	=85	130%
1561	12	0	=12	25	1	=26	117%
1576	50	4	=54	76	13	=89	65%
1581	31	3	=34	65	12	=77	126%
1583	30	2	=32	61	12	=73	128%
1588	40	1	=41	89	6	=95	132%
1590	70	2	=72	49	2	=51	-29%
1591	20	1	=21	18	3	=21	0%
Totals							50%

* Winn Dixie provided sales numbers for strawberries and pecans. Twenty-six of the 33 stores experienced an increase in sales that ranged from 2% to 158%. The average increase of all Rouses' stores that experienced an increase in sales was 71%. The averaged increases and decreases of all 33 Winn Dixie demo locations was a 50% increase in sales. Sixty-six individual commodity demonstrations were conducted in the 33 Winn Dixie retail stores and the demos proved to be a success in increasing sales.

Breaux Mart Demonstrations 2012

March 31, April 9

Store	Prior Demo Event Sales Figures for Demonstrated Crops	Demo Event Day Sales	Increase in Sales
507-Strawberries & Sweet Potatoes	131.01	246.55	88%
406 Strawberries & Sweet Potatoes	49.05	72.16	47%
304 -Tomatoes & Strawberries	180.13	182.70	1%
303 - Tomatoes & Strawberries	194.84	199.23	2%
405 - Tomatoes & Strawberries	34.11	85.63	151%
Totals			58%

** Breaux Mart provided sales numbers for strawberries and tomatoes in three of the five participating stores and strawberries and sweet potatoes in two of the five stores. All five stores experienced an increase in sales that ranged from 1% to 151%. The average increase of all Breaux Mart stores was 58%. Ten individual commodity demonstrations were conducted in the five Breaux Mart stores and the demos proved to be successful in increasing sales.*

Rouses Demonstrations 2012

March 23, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31

Store	Demo Day Sales	Post-Demo Sales	Increase in Sales
Strawberries, Yams, Pecans			
Mushrooms, Tomatoes			
10	44	23	91%
23	66	17	288%
45	83	28	196%
5	23	23	0%
38	112	51	120%
27	133	100	33%
28	54	48	13%
3	6	3	100%
46	97	43	126%
26	257	137	88%
44	12	14	-14%
32	10	14	-29%
33	89	56	59%

34	60	48	25%
31	29	23	26%
20	73	109	-33%
24	14	8	75%
18	12	9	33%
21	24	44	-45%
36	46	31	48%
14	36	18	100%
25	55	24	129%
35	26	10	160%
4	2	1	100%
12	1	10	-90%
37	37	40	-7%
22	60	60	0%
29	83	74	12%
6	39	45	-13%
15	63	70	-10%
16	50	45	11%
17	7	15	-53%
Demo Combined Average			48%

** Rouses provided sales numbers for strawberries, yams, pecans, mushrooms and tomatoes. Twenty-one of the 32 stores experienced an increase in sales that ranged from 11% to 288%. The average increase of all Rouses' stores experiencing an increase in sales was 87%. The averaged increases and decreases of all 32 Rouses demo locations was a 48% increase in sales. One hundred sixty individual commodity demonstrations were conducted in the 32 Rouses retail stores and the demos proved to be successful in increasing sales.*

Matherne's Demonstrations 2012

April 15

Store	Post Demo Sales	Demo Day Sales	Increase in Sales
Baton Rouge	(No Data)	(No Data)	

** Matherne's demonstrated three individual commodities: yams, strawberries, and tomatoes. The retailer was not able to retrieve daily sales data. They did provide weekly sales data of the entire week after the event and that of the week of the demo event. This reporting did show a combined weekly sales increase for the week of the demo compared to following week; however, without specific event day data, we can't give an accurate number of sales increase as a direct result of the demonstrations. Without this data, this store will not be included in final calculations to determine project sales increase.*

Whole Foods Demonstrations 2012

March 30, 31

Store	Day Before Demo Sales	Demo Event Sales	Increase in Sales
Baton Rouge			
Yams	33.22 lbs	70.99 lbs	
Sliced Mushrooms	0	17	
2 lb Strawberries	28	53	Store
Tomatoes	34.64 lbs	70.01	Increase
			120%
Veterans	693	781	
Tomatoes	37.21 lbs	38.99 lbs	
Mushrooms	0	5	Store
Yams	75.17 lbs	45.02 lbs	Increase
			8%
Arabella Station			
OG Mushrooms	0	4	
Whole Mushrooms	0	2	
1lb Strawberries	147	294	Store
Tomatoes	44.65 lbs	83.96 lbs	Increase
			100%
Totals			76%

** Whole Foods provided sales numbers for strawberries, yams, mushrooms and tomatoes. All three stores experienced an increase in sales that ranged from 8% to 120%. The averaged increase in sales of all three Whole Foods demo locations was 76%. Eleven individual commodity demonstrations were conducted in the three Whole Foods retail stores and the demos proved to be successful in increasing sales.*

Of the five different retail chains that hosted product demonstrations, all five of the stores realized an increase in total sales. All retailers were very pleased with the results and expressed the desire to work with LDAF to conduct product demonstrations in the future. When taking the average percentage of increased sales from the four participating retailers that provided data and then averaging those figures, the increased sales for the entire project resulted in an average of 58%. This increase in sales met and exceeded the goal of 50%.

Beneficiaries

Direct beneficiaries of this project were the specialty crop producers that supplied the retailers where product demonstrations were conducted. Two hundred forty-seven different commodity demonstrations were conducted at the varying stores. Producer commodities demonstrated were strawberries, pecans, yams, tomatoes, and mushrooms. The additional sales prompted the retailer to order additional inventory for their stores. Seventy-four retail locations also benefited from having the product demonstrations hosted at their locations and benefited from the sales from the day as well as from the advertising opportunity and customer involvement in their stores. The consumers and their families that patronized each product demonstration location also benefited from product awareness and new preparation ideas for fresh specialty crops and their availability. Consumers that purchased the specialty crops additionally benefited from adding healthy, fresh foods to their diet.

Lessons Learned

We learned that when you are dealing with such a large number of retail stores, it is very difficult to get sales data. Prior to the demonstrations when in the planning phase, retail representatives are willing to provide sales numbers as a result of the demonstrations. However, once the demonstrations have taken place, it is actually time consuming to get the numbers. The urgency to provide the information seems to have disappeared and some locations can't get the information that has been requested.

In the future if this type of project is conducted, we will ask that prior week or prior day sales data is provided before the demonstration event takes place. By doing this, we would be able to determine if the store is capable of providing sales data and how long it takes to acquire such sales information. If the store is unable to provide the pre-event sales data, then that store demonstration should be dropped from the schedule. If getting the pre-event sales data is completed and done reasonably, then getting the day of the demo sales data should also prove equally as reliable. Without the data, it would be impossible to accurately measure the project.

In conducting this project, it was once again observed that sampling of fruit resulted in higher sales increases.

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ADVERTISING FARMERS' MARKET SUPPORT

Project Summary

This project developed and purchased advertisements for Louisiana's farmers' markets to inform the consuming public as to locations and hours of operations of the markets in Louisiana. Even with the recent growth of consumers buying fresh and local, most markets are small and have little to no funding to promote their markets or their vendors' fresh, local, nutritional products. This project worked to produce and provide support to help better inform and motivate consumers to purchase.

This project built on a previously funded project with the SCBGP. The project complimented the prior grant period project by developing and producing additional advertising that was fiscally unable to be produced. The ability to purchase additional ads meant additional consumers could be reached. This project allowed additional advertising venues such as newspaper print ads and radio ads to be utilized to better inform and motivate consumers to purchase specialty products and inform as to the locations and hours of operations of Louisiana markets.

Project Approach

LDAF under this project developed and purchased radio and newspaper print ads. Radio stations throughout the state were used and newspaper ads were placed in parish and city newspapers where Louisiana farmers' markets were located. Radio allowed for quick response, low cost production, and heightened frequency at peak times. The ads also pointed the listener to LDAF's website that listed Louisiana farmers' markets and roadside stands. This provided the listener one location to look up the markets closest to them and their hours of operation.

Louisiana Radio Network and WWL media outlets were chosen statewide to target audience listenership of persons ages 18-64. Sixty-two stations ran 30 second commercials over the two week period of May 14 through May 25, 2012. A total of 1,488 advertisement spots aired to a household exposure of over 1,022,400 with each listener hearing our message an average of 2.6 times.

Newspaper print ads were also part of this advertising project. Newspapers were chosen based on locations of established Louisiana farmers' markets. An ad was designed and provided to each paper. Along with the print ad messaging, a website address was also provided to drive visitors to the site to find the listing of Louisiana farmers' market locations and hours of operation.

- May 15, 2012
Welsh Gazette/Citizen
- May 16, 2012
Alexandria Town Talk | Bastrop Daily Enterprise | St. Tammany Farmer | St. Tammany News |
Beauregard Daily News | Franklin Banner-Tribune | Houma Courier/Thibodeaux Comet |

Hammond Daily Star | Jennings Daily Star | Lafayette Daily Advertiser | Lake Charles American Press | Leesville Daily Leader | Monroe News Star | Natchitoches Times | New Iberian | Opelousas Daily World | St Francisville Democrat | Winn Parish Enterprise | Zachary Plainsman News

- May 17, 2012
Denham Springs/Livingston Parish News | Gueydan Journal | Mansfield Enterprise | Tallulah Madison Journal | Ville Platt Gazette
- June 07, 2012 | Baton Rouge Advocate

A total of 26 print advertisements ran in newspapers throughout Louisiana to a circulation exposure of over 302,194 households.

A survey was conducted to determine the effectiveness of the commercials upon attendance. Each farmers' market manager was contacted and asked to complete the short survey to determine success of the program in reaching its goals.

LDAF modified the home page of the louisianagrown.com website to advertise online. This venue is still visible and continues to promote buying local and educate the public as to the farmers' market locations in Louisiana. With one convenient click, they have access to all farmers' market and roadside stand locations, hours of operation, and commodities available.

Goals and Outcomes Achieved

The goal of this project was to alert and educate consumers as to the availability of specialty crops and farmers' markets in their area, thereby increasing sales. This was to be accomplished through farmers' market support advertising of at least 40 advertisements for Louisiana farmers' markets, increasing attendance by 10%.

The farmers' market support project surpassed the goal of alerting and educating consumers by utilizing radio and print ads throughout Louisiana. Twenty-four advertisements were purchased and ran on 62 stations for a total of 1,488 thirty second spots running throughout Louisiana. The radio ads had a household reach of over 1,022,400. A total of 26 print advertisements ran in newspapers throughout Louisiana with an exposure circulation of more than 302,194. The goal of purchasing 40 advertisements was met and exceeded.

In order to determine the increase of attendance at farmers' markets following the radio and print advertising, LDAF conducted a survey of Louisiana farmers' market managers. We learned from the prior year project that there was a low response rate to the survey when it was mailed. Under this grant project, LDAF staff personally called each farmers' market manager of markets that were targeted by print advertisements. Thirty farmers' market managers were contacted and 73% of Louisiana markets responded to the survey. Of the 22 market managers surveyed, 19 markets reported they did see an increase in attendance following the commercials and one did not. When asked for actual statistics on attendance, the markets reported varying results that ranged from a

10% increase to more than a 60% increase. By averaging the reported increases and the one reported non-increase, it was determined that attendance increased an average of 21% overall. Two markets reported that they hadn't been opened long enough to determine attendance pattern or give percentage numbers.

Market	Increase Reported
Zachary	0%
St. Francisville	50%
Welsh	20%
Main Street – Jennings	20%
Morehouse	15%
Desoto	5%
Teche Area	25%
3 rd Street –Vernon Parish	30%
Sulphur	10%
DeRidder	15%
Cajun	20%
Franklin	10%
Acadiana Farmers' Market	60 %
West Monroe	30%
Charleston	20%
Camellia City	15%
Covington	20%
Azalea Street	10%
Winn	25%
Red Stick	15%
Averaged Increase	21%

Beneficiaries


Direct beneficiaries of this project were Louisiana's 30 farmers' markets and the more than 100 producers selling at those markets. As the commercials aired, the consumer was informed as to the specialty crops that were in season and directed to the LDAF website to find their local farmers' market location and hours of operations. The producers benefited from the increase in traffic/sales and consumers benefited by being better informed of the availability of fresh, local products and where to find them. The website also listed more than 90 roadside stand locations, so those producers also benefited by the exposure resulting from traffic to the site.

Lessons Learned

We consulted several farmers' market managers prior to choosing the form of advertising we should use in order to determine the best avenue that would get our message out to the public. Several markets expressed that in their experience not all consumers receive newspapers anymore. We tried to address this fact and diversify the advertising in this project. By advertising in multiple venues such as newspaper, radio and internet, we were able to reach the public in many different ways and not leave out exposure to those that may not get the newspaper, drive cars daily or have access to the internet.


Additional Information

Print Ads



Food Less Traveled

Louisiana Grown fruits and vegetables get to market fresh in a matter of hours, not days. Taste the difference. Find your nearest farmers market at LouisianaGrown.com.



LouisianaGrown.com

LOUISIANA DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY | MIKE STRAIN DVM, COMMISSIONER



Radio Advertisement

To hear 30 second advertisement, visit the provided link:

<http://www.louisianagrown.com/newsroom/radio-commercials>

Website Promotion



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SPECIFIC COMMODITY SEASONAL SUPPORT

Project Summary

This project provided specific commodity advertising during its growing season. The commodity chosen was strawberries. This project promoted support of the local economy by developing a focused campaign to increase awareness of the strawberry season and increase their sales by informing the consumer of the benefits of purchasing locally and the availability of the product.

This project built on previously funded specific commodity seasonal support projects with the SCBGP. The project complimented prior grant periods' projects by developing and producing additional advertising that was fiscally unable to be produced. This project allowed for an additional commodity industry to be selected and promoted in Louisiana. This project focused on educating and motivating consumers to increase their purchasing of Louisiana strawberries. In this project, billboard and television media advertising were used.

Project Approach

LDAF contracted with GMc Advertising to develop advertising to promote the specific specialty crop commodity strawberries. The project assisted this industry by purchasing generic advertisements for support for all Louisiana strawberry growers, before and during their 2012 season. LDAF consulted with strawberry growers and the Louisiana Strawberry Promotion Board to determine the industry need and the message to be developed. LDAF and GMc determined the most efficient way to reach consumers was to utilize billboard and television advertising. The purchased advertisements took place during a six week period during March and April 2012.

LDAF evaluated the effectiveness of the Specific Commodity Seasonal Support project by surveying strawberry producers. LDAF staff developed surveys and contacted the producers personally by phone after their season ended. A 15% sampling survey of Louisiana producers was conducted. The survey was conducted by phone to gauge project success and to acquire reporting data.

Goals and Outcomes Achieved

The goal of the Specific Commodity Seasonal Support project was to purchase generic advertisements for a specific specialty crop commodity to alert and educate a potential of 750,000

consumers as to the availability of a specific specialty crop and increase sales of that commodity by 20%. Strawberry was the commodity promoted in this project. The goals were met and surpassed.

2,354,065 households were exposed to this project's advertising message due to paid advertising efforts during a six week period March 5 through April 22, 2012. Two different advertising methods were utilized. Billboard visuals were secured and television advertising was purchased during morning hours. As a bonus four billboards remained up beyond their official end date. The Denham Springs, West Bank, Iowa, Morgan City and Alexandria billboards' bonused exposure resulted in an additional household reach of 5,512,848. When tabulating the combined household reach of paid ads and bonus ads this project was able to reach a total of 7,866,913. We surpassed our goal of reaching 750,000 by 948%.

Twelve billboard locations were secured throughout Louisiana: New Orleans, Metairie, Denham Springs, Baton Rouge (I-10 Siegen & I-10 College), Monroe, Westbank-Harvey, Iowa, Morgan City, Bossier City, Shreveport, and Alexandria.

Two of Louisiana's major television stations, WAFB TV9 and WWL TV/Cable Newswatch 15, were secured to run morning traffic watch spots on their stations. Ten spots ran on WAFB TV9 April 2 through April 22, 2012, and 40 spots ran on WWL TV/Cable Newswatch15 April 12 through April 22, 2012.

LDAF added a webpage to the louisianagrown.com website during the season to advertise online. This venue added to the project efforts to provide specific commodity seasonal support by educating the public of the strawberry season and the contact information of producers.

LDAF worked with the Louisiana Strawberry Promotion Board (LSPB) and was provided a producer list. LDAF staff conducted a sampling survey by contacting 15% of Louisiana strawberry producers by phone to record their responses. The consensus of those who responded was positive and several expressed that they had a good producing crop year and saw higher early season sales than usual. By getting the consumer to purchase early in the season, they were able to capitalize on their higher price. Producers explained that as the season progresses, the price of strawberries declines and they don't make as much on the same product. By having the consumer purchase early, they were able to make more money.

For the survey, we sampled 15% of Louisiana strawberry producers. Of those producers, 77% responded and of those, 100% reported an increase in sales and demand during and/or after the commercials aired. The range of reported sales increases varied from 15% - 25%. The average increase in sales for those reporting an increase was 21%. As a result of the survey responses, it was determined that this project was a success and that the goal of increased sales as a result of this project was met and surpassed. Due to the success of the project, LDAF will consider additional projects for Specific Commodity Seasonal Support for other specialty crop industries in the future.

Beneficiaries

This campaign didn't promote a single producer; it promoted the strawberry industry as a whole. There are currently 87 Louisiana strawberry growers and all directly benefited from the generic seasonal advertising campaign. More than seven million Louisiana consumers also benefited from becoming more educated as to the availability of strawberries, their nutritional benefits and producer, information to find local growers.

Lessons Learned

It was learned that scheduling advertisements to begin a few weeks prior to the harvesting of the strawberry crop created great awareness of the season and consumers were ready to purchase and even inquired at retail stores on when they would be able to purchase. According to several producers, having the public aware of the season early greatly improved their profit margins by selling at the peak of the season instead of later.

Additional Information

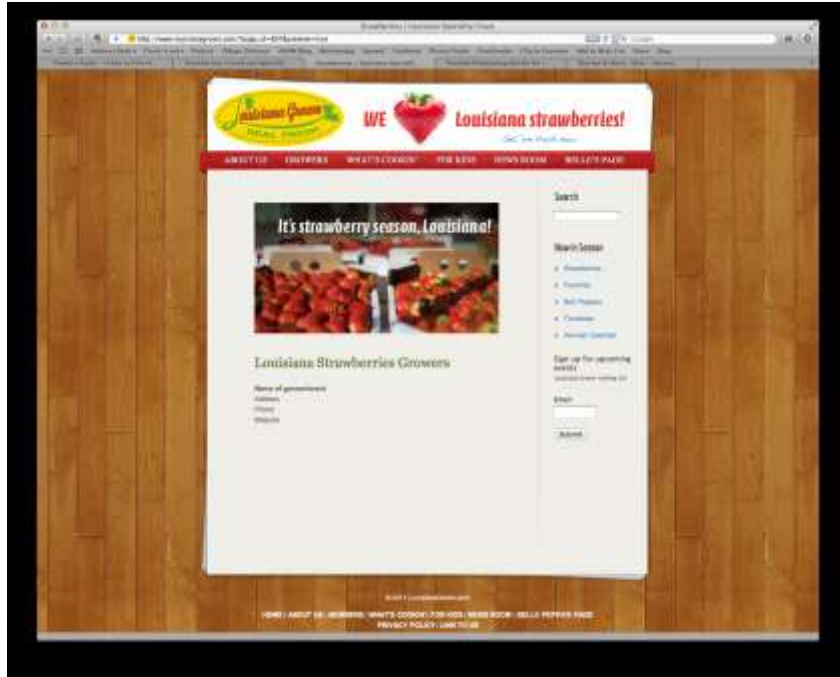
Strawberry Billboards



Television Morning Show Traffic Ads



Website Promotion



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